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OTHER BUSINESS

Reflective jackets for car drivers

Submitted by the International Touring Alliance/International Automobile Association
(AIT/FIA)

Italy and Spain have passed legislation making it mandatory for car drivers to wear reflecting jackets when leaving their vehicle in certain traffic conditions, becoming effective on 1 April 2004 and 24 July 2004 respectively. Portugal is proposing the introduction of such legislation for autumn 2004, and Austria for mid-2005.

The AIT/FIA is of the opinion that reflecting jackets will improve the visibility of road users especially after breakdowns and accidents, and that such legislation will in principle contribute towards the enhancement of road safety. However, since the rules are not harmonized and application will differ from country to country, the AIT/FIA is concerned that these rules may work to the disadvantage of foreign motorists visiting these countries. Where specifications vary greatly, foreign motorists may have to carry with them different jackets for different countries, which will result in considerable uncertainty among tourists. While legislation in Italy requires a specific behaviour, i.e. wearing the jackets in certain situations, in Spain the provision is related to the equipment of the car, making it mandatory to carry the jacket on board. This has caused confusion among tourists travelling to Spain or Italy and AIT/FIA's member organizations representing some 43 million motorists across Europe have had a large number of requests for advice and information.

The AIT/FIA therefore requests that member States passing legislation on reflecting jackets ensure extensive harmonization of specifications and application rules. As long as harmonization is not ensured foreign motorists coming from countries where no such legislation exists should at least be exempted from the obligation of carrying the jackets on board. Such obligation would contravene the principles of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic. It needs to be ensured that all reflecting jackets conforming to Euro standard EN 471 protection requirements will be recognised in the case of foreign motorists even if they do not fully comply with the national legislation.
